



AUSTRALIAN

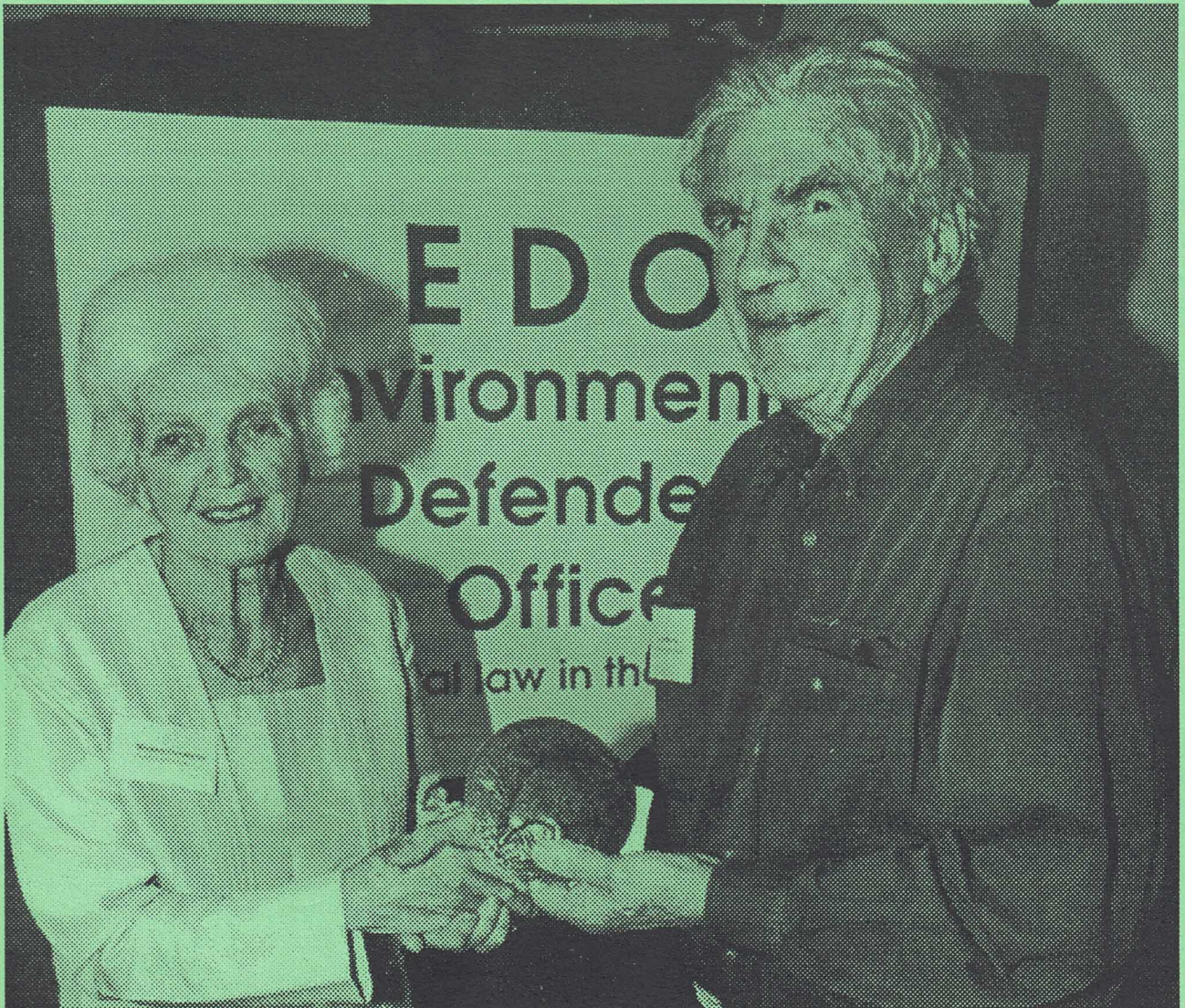
Wildlife

SPRING 1998

Journal of the Wildlife Preservation Society
of Australia Inc. (Founded 1909)

\$2.50 (for non-members)

Print Post Approval No. PP243459/00117



President, Vincent Serventy presenting the Inaugural Serventy Conservation Medal to Margaret Thorsborne of Cardwell, Queensland.

Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia, Inc. (Founded 1909)
GPO Box 3428 Sydney NSW 1043



'AUSTRALIAN WILDLIFE'

*is the official journal of the
Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc.*

*Founded in 1909, the Society is dedicated
to the conservation of our unique
Australian Wildlife in all its forms.*

Print Post Approval No. PP243459/00117

Price \$2.50 (for non-members)

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Production/ Printing: StuDio DiseNo
Budget Printing

Articles may be copied or quoted with
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REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

We would like to hear from our country members, anywhere in Australia who would like to become regional councillors. The value to us is we would have a more intimate relationship with women and men who have a knowledge which could be valuable for conservation.

Such Regional Councillors would be sent the minutes of our Council meetings so they would know more of what we are doing. They could also submit motions for consideration and so play a part in Society decisions. By being listed in our newsletter State members could contact them in emergencies.

*All articles are written by
Vincent Serventy and Patrick W. Medway
unless stated otherwise.*

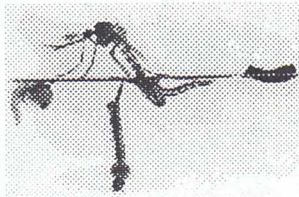
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From the Presidents Desk...

Know Your Friends

The pictures on this page may surprise you. The bush fly is a well known pest. Yet it helps spread calicivirus assisting us in getting rid of our major pest, the rabbit. These and other insects are unsuspected friends.



The mosquito shown emerging from its pupal case which lives in the water is a dangerous spreader of diseases, the worst being malaria. Fortunately almost missing from Australia it kills at least a million folk each year in other parts of the world. The photo also shows the eggraft laid by the female insect once she has had a blood meal, hence her interest in humans. The wriggler, the larval form must come to the surface to take a breath of air. Finally when fully grown she becomes a pupa, tumbling in the water.

However, the same insect helps spread myxomatosis, one of the diseases we brought to Australia to destroy the rabbits which were costing our farmers probably a billion dollars a year in lost pasture and also causing erosion, an added cost.

Termites are best known as a pest in urban areas, devouring the wood in our homes. Yearly attention keeps this pest in check. However, in our bushland, particularly in arid areas, plants of all kinds, including dead trees would remain untouched, robbing the soil of the fertility locked in their tissues. Termites return all this into the soil after using such dead plants as food.



This mound is of a grass-eating termite in northern Australia. Seen from the sea early sailors described these as being native huts!

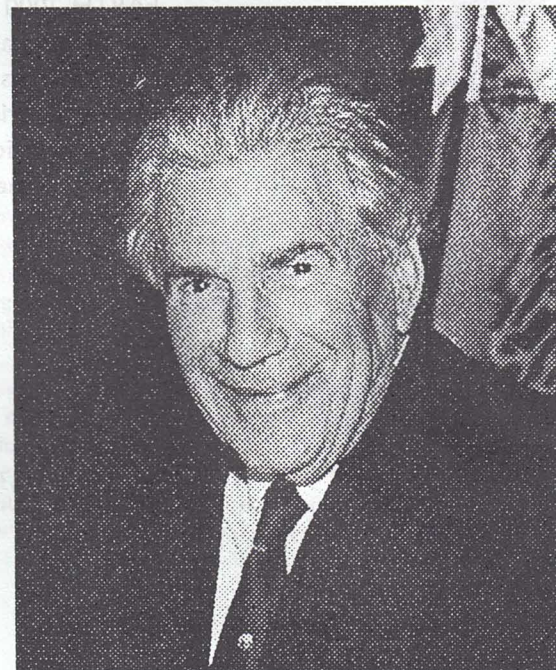
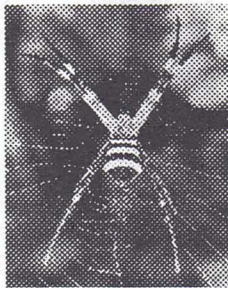
Termites also allowed your president to score off Robert Menzies many years ago. I was giving a lecture

and the great man was in the audience. I explained how politicians needed to learn some natural history. They often spoke of communists white-anting the sturdy timbers of the nation!

I told them that was the wrong name. Not white ants but termites. Also these insects did a lot of good for the nation by getting rid of dead wood and letting vigorous new growth to get through. I must admit Menzies laughed as much as the rest of the audience!

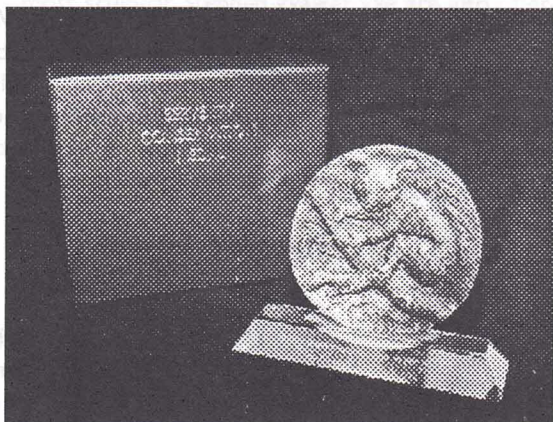
Spiders. Much disliked by young ladies. However, it is impossible to calculate how many billions of tonnes of insects spiders devour each year. There are other allies, usually small and little noticed, helping keep pests of all kinds, usually insects, controlled.

This particular St John's Cross Spider is an attractive orbweaver common in our bushland. This photo does not show the Cross which earned it the name but does show its beauty. With the webs sprinkled with dew very early morning walk allows us to enjoy the spectacle of the orbweavers.



Vincent Serventy, AM President

Inaugural Serventy Conservation Medal Award



Serventy Conservation Medal and stand.

The President and Council of the Society is pleased to announce the inaugural award of the **SERVENTY CONSERVATION MEDAL** to Mrs **Margaret Grace Thorsborne** of Meunga Creek, Cardwell, Queensland.

The presentation was made at 11:30am on Saturday 24th October, 1998 at the Conference of the National Environmental Defender's Office Network, in the Faculty of Nursing, University of Sydney.

Margaret Thorsborne is a tireless worker for conservation and along with her husband Arthur (who died in 1991) has been involved in many local conservation campaigns including protecting the coastal area at Pine Ridge Reserve, Cooloola, Kennedy Bay, Mt Windsor, the Daintree and Hinchinbrook Island.

Margaret's involvement has included the propagation and distribution of native plants, cassowary conservation, protection of the mahogany glider habitat, riparian vegetation protection, protection of the view from Cardwell gap and collecting plants for the Queensland Herbarium. In recognition of their work a number of species have been named after the Thorsbornes including a vine, two mosses, a crab and a spider. Margaret co-authored with husband Arthur, 'Hinchinbrook Island – the land that time forgot' (Weldon 1988); and following a long campaign to stop the shooting of the Torres Strait Pigeons on Brook Islands, they wrote 'Seabirds of the Brook Islands' and 'Population Changes of the Torresian Imperial Pigeon'. Margaret still monitors the pigeon population, which has recovered from a low 1400 birds in 1968 to some 30,000 birds today.



The President speaking and presenting the inaugural Serventy Conservation Medal to Mrs Margaret Thorsborne for her work to save Hinchinbrook Island.

In 1980 Margaret and Arthur donated their 50-acre property to the Edmund Kennedy National Park. Along with others they persuaded the Queensland Government to establish the National Park in 1977. Margaret received the ACF 'Peter Rawlinson Award' in 1995 and was a finalist in the BHP Pursuit of Excellence Award (1984). Now in her 70's, Margaret continues to display her own unique and courageous spirit, inspiring and leading people around her to be active and strong in the face of destructive forces, and to be quick to begin the healing process by replanting damaged areas. Margaret continues her efforts to protect the Hinchinbrook Island area from inappropriate development and has written articles on the plants of the Cardwell seashore.

The President, Vincent Serventy AM said, 'Margaret Thorsborne is an outstanding and committed conservationist and is a very worthy recipient of the inaugural Serventy Conservation Medal and Prize. We know she will inspire many others.'



Some of the two hundred guests at the Presentation Ceremony.

The Serventy Conservation Medal and Prize of \$1000 is to be awarded annually and was formed to honour three members of the Serventy family (Lucy, Dominic and Vincent Serventy) who have all been very closely committed to conservation.



Margaret Thorsborne addressing the audience and thanking the Society for the presentation of the medal.

Serventy Conservation Medal

The Society has decided to create a Serventy Conservation Medal, named in honour of three members of the Serventy Family, Vincent Serventy AM, who has been a member of the Society for more than fifty years and its President for the last thirty years. His sister Lucy Serventy, and brother Dr. Dominic Serventy.

Our intention is to award the new Serventy Conservation Medal, to those who labour in the conservation field for a love of nature and a determination that it should be conserved.

Lucy Serventy



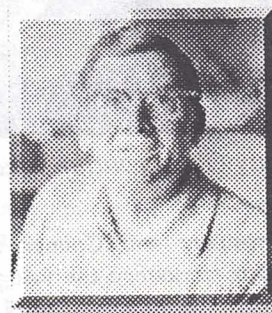
Seventy years ago Lucy became a Life Member of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia. So began a lifetime interest in conservation.

Ten years later she encouraged her young brother Vincent to also join the Society. So began a powerful partnership in the West which did great work for conservation. Together they organised the wildlife shows which provided ample funds for the W.A. Naturalists Club.

Lucy did more. In charge of the Junior Naturalists Club for many years she encouraged many youngsters into a career in science.

She also began the Western Walking Club where many of the walkers on long bush treks became educated in nature. Vincent claims that without her constant encouragement he could never have achieved the work he did in this field. Certainly well deserving to be honoured in this way.

Dr. Dominic Serventy



As the elder of the eight strong Serventy clan, Dominic played a leading part in encouraging their interest in natural history. Later he moved in more specialised fields where he was able to use his scientific studies to

become regarded as among the world's greatest ornithologists.

Yet he never forgot conservation. His field work on the short-tailed shearwater became a classic of its kind. He led the scientific fight to save Kings Park from the developers. He also provided wise advice to the newly formed Australian Conservation Foundation.

Birds Australia has honoured him by the Serventy Medal, an annual award for the person doing the best work in ornithology during the previous year.

Vincent Serventy



As the Society's President we had no problem with all three being joined together in the Serventy Conservation Award. In this way, this remarkable group will be remembered, not only for work in one field of science but for distinguished service in

an even more important region, saving the world of wildlife.

As Thoreau wrote more than a hundred years ago... "In wildness is the preservation of the world..."

Medal Design

The medal, has been designed by Australia's foremost sculptor Stephen Walker. We are also offering a cash reward of one thousand dollars to the winner. Many conservationists in the past have suffered financially for their devotion to the cause. This cash will be some tribute for their dedication. The bronze medal will be a constant reminder that the conservation movement has remembered their work in the past, just as history will remember the same achievements in the future.

Selection Procedures

The decision on the granting of each year's medal will be decided by a full meeting of the Council, including Regional Councillors and our Scientific Advisory panel to ensure a good spread of expertise.

Generous Donation

The Serventy family will provide the first thousand dollars to the medal prize money and we will approach other conservation friends for the same amount in following years.

For further information and Nomination Forms please contact the Secretary, Wildlife Preservation Society of Australia Inc., GPO Box 3428, Sydney, NSW, Australia, 1043 or call 02-9556-1537.

Wildlife Preservation News

Wildlife Corridor

A NSW politician has a great idea. He is John Watkins, the MP for Gladesville. He is working hard to convince all the Councils along the Lane Cove River to offer all their small bushland parks to the national park service so a fifteen hundred hectare park can be created, forming a large wildlife corridor along which our animals and plants can travel.

Humans too since most of these places are well used and the area I know best is the Nature Trail along the river created by the Hunters Hill Council. Today this is part of the Great Walk from Sydney to Newcastle.

We will offer all our assistance in this project but Mr Watkins thinks the new national park should be in place by the end of the year so he hardly needs our help.

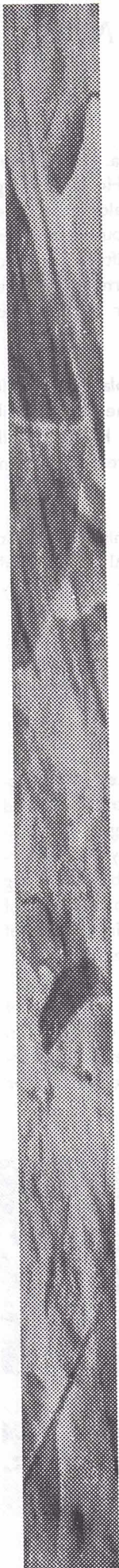
The Bad Old Days

Recently we saw some revolting television pictures showing farmers in South Australia who had trapped mobs of galahs and were engaged in clubbing these to death. Could stupidity go any further! Possibly the same birds might be controlling pest plants but whether useful or not the sight of a flock of galahs wheeling in the sunlight is one of the greatest sights nature has to offer.

When farmers complain of lack of sympathy of urban folk for the financial disasters of farmers in the last few years it may be that television coverage such as this cruelty is one of the reasons for lack of concern.

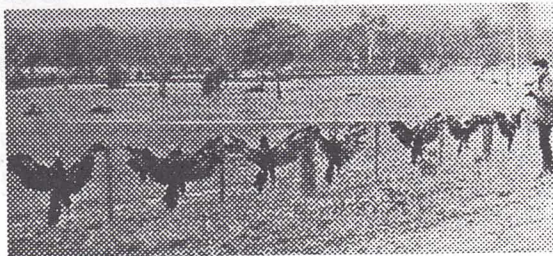


Galahs can cause damage to crops.



The other picture from Eric Worrell, taken many years ago when equally stupid farmers shot wedgetail eagles and paraded the dead bodies along the fence to warn off other eagles. Later research showed that these birds fed mainly on rabbits as well as bearded dragon lizards, not on newborn lambs. The only lambs they attacked were already dead or dying due to mismothering as these eagles are mainly scavengers.

Their large numbers were due to the road carnage of kangaroos and other wildlife on our roads



Dead eagles were used to warn off other eagles.

Landcare

This is a wonderful idea for which Australia can be proud. It was first begun by Labor and continued by the Coalition, a bi-partisan effort we hope will continue. In New South Wales there are 1300 listed Landcare groups which also include beachcare, rivercare and other environmental causes.

The National Heritage Trust provides most of the funding though there is also Landcare Foundation which has reached the ten million dollar target.

If you want to know more about Landcare there is now a new journal 'Australian Landcare' which covers the whole of Australia and will provide plenty of ideas.

It is published by Rural Press in Victoria and the address is PO Box 160 Port Melbourne 3207. The cost is \$27 for 12 months.

Buy your copy and better still join a local group or if there are none in your district, form one.

Goodbye Alec

A great friend of wildlife, Alex Griffith of Currumbin died recently. As a beekeeper irritated by lorikeets pestering him when extracting honey from bee comb he decided to feed them on surplus bread and honey so saving his beloved gladioli from being damaged.

Soon this became one of the great sights of Currumbin, then the Gold Coast, then of the rest of Australian and finally most overseas tourists who flocked to his wildlife sanctuary. He donated this valuable property worth millions to the State National Trust of Queensland who preciously guard this wildlife treasure.

He was a longtime member and a good friend of ours and we will miss his cheerful voice and presence.

He died on July 29 in his 86th year.

The two photos were taken at Currumbin when our family first met Alex and his birds.

The first shows Natasha feeding the friendly lorikeets.

The second photo shows Cathy with Natasha in the background sitting surrounded by birds. We filmed these for our documentary Nature Walkabout and added our little publicity to the work of this great man.





Wasting Aid

Often aid abroad is spent on projects which suit the giver more than the received. Clearfelling forests to grow beef for hamburgers is one of the most infamous.

Aid watch is an organisation which studies such projects and takes action on the wrong one. Their address is PO Box 652, Woollahra NSW 2022

National Heritage Trust

This one and a quarter billion dollar fund for the environment is an excellent idea. Even better if funded from ordinary tax revenue like defense, health or education rather than by selling off assets. When that hollow log is emptied will the money continue?

Killing pelicans

"They are only f...pelicans mate" was the statement of Joe Dimento, the driver of a Mercedes along the Fish Markets wharf at Pyrmont. He killed one and injured three. Fined \$1000 plus court costs and judging by his photograph and comments as well as being able to afford a Mercedes he may not have learned the lesson that wildlife has its place in any sensible person's life.

Puppies

Everyone loves a puppy but take care, an article in New Scientist quoted evidence from the United States that in their faeces can be illness or even death from diseases like giardia as well as parasitic worms. In 1993 one hundred people died and 400,000 became ill. Folk who want their children to enjoy the experience should make sure their puppies don't lick their child's face and when cleaning up use gloves and make sure their children wash their hands before eating.

Calicivirus

Our executive officer is on the State pest animals committee so if you want action taken, phone him. Good news from Victoria where the government has funded a Rabbit Buster programme. Groups

receiving aid must match it dollar for dollar. Drop in numbers of rabbits is followed by warren ripping and also poisoning. That gets rid of rabbits for good in the particular region.

Which proves the point of my farmer friend Verne Maclaren who told me when he sees one rabbit on his farm, he doesn't say it's only one but pursues it until it's none!

Together with rabbit proof fencing his farm became famous and when it was sold on his retirement, buyers came from all over the State to bid for the property.

He also kept ten percent of his property as a wildlife refuge, showing good farmers can have their cake and eat it too!

In Ten Years We'll Run Out of Oil!

That kind of statement brings cheers from conservation audiences. Paul Erlich was famous for that and during his heyday he could charge \$50,000 for a lecture. We wrote to him many years ago and decided he was too rich for our blood.

Sadly for Paul a fellow American noted every such doomsday pronouncement and ten years later the media was able to repeat the statement, then the position at the time showing oil was abundant. The same persistent irritant was able to explode every such statement down the years.

Paul is a very good scientist and means well in conservation terms. His intention no doubt is to shock audiences out of their complacency. Still he does remind me of those hellfire priests of my own youth who terrified us by promising illness and finally an eternity in hell for practises practically every child carried out. When I finally confessed it to my priest he yawned and said in penance "say thee hail Mary's" or some other minor penalty.

The New Scientist has indicated in a recent article how the world has immense resources of methane deep in the ocean which will be 'hellish' to get out.

Yet consider the following facts.

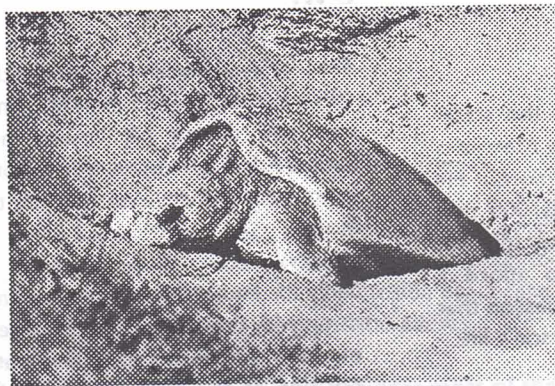
'...While the known oil reserves will be gone in about forty years (note the known) and natural gas a few decades later, methane hydrate...enough to supply the world's energy needs for centuries...'

Our problem will not be lack of energy sources but the rising world population will destroy everything that makes for quality of life... Few of us would want to survive in conditions like the slums of London, New York, Cairo, Delhi or any other large world city.

That is why our Society holds dear the maxim of Thoreau, 'In wildness is the preservation of the world...'

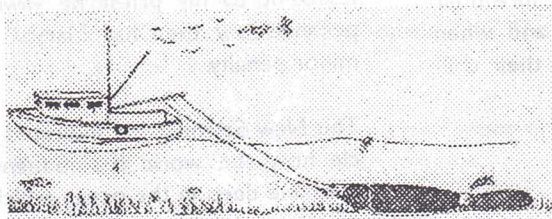
News from Around Australia

Cyanide Killers



Nesting Loggerhead Turtle.

I am also including another article on the cyanide killers. Though this appears to be taking place in other than Australian waters we are sure some boats drift into our seas. Certainly any trawlers lacking turtle excluders should be ordered out of our EEZ waters.



TED-equipped shrimp trawl allows turtles, fin-fish and other bycatch to safely escape.

Good News from Hinchinbrook

In September the Senate decided to set up an enquiry into Port Hinchinbrook. Remembering our battle to save the farmlands of middle and western NSW from the Australian Army this could be the end of the struggle. Their sensible report spelled the end of one of the more stupid of the Labor government's attempts to create an army base near Canberra.

The kiss of death came when General Levy was asked by a senator, "why not set up the base at Townsville which has the land and the desire for it?" The General's reply: "It's too close to any potential enemy".

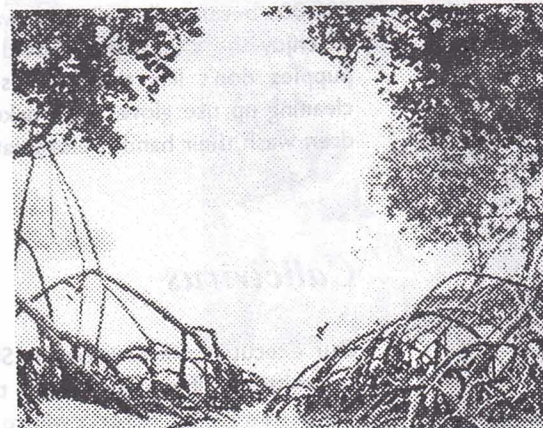
Then I knew we had won.

Congratulations to the Queensland conservationists who have battled hard for this enquiry where government experts can be forced to tell the truth.

Two views from Hinchinbrook Pass. The first is an Aboriginal fish trap, the second a view of the mangroves being destroyed by the tourist development.



Aboriginal fish trap for Hinchinbrook Channel.



Mangroves near Hinchinbrook Island.

Victoria

The regional forest agreements are affecting Tasmania, Western Australia and Victoria. Our Society is assisting WA to prepare a television documentary on their battle and our president will be in the west.

Election Result

Sadly few leaders mentioned the environment in their election speeches. However the results do give us some comfort. The Coalition now has a leader whose majority has been slashed while the total vote for his party is less than that of Labor though not showing the numbers of seats gained and lost.

Certainly it is no endorsement of the policy of handing back environmental matters to the States.

In my visit to Western Australia I was heartened by the interest in environmental matters and in particular with the work being done by CALM.

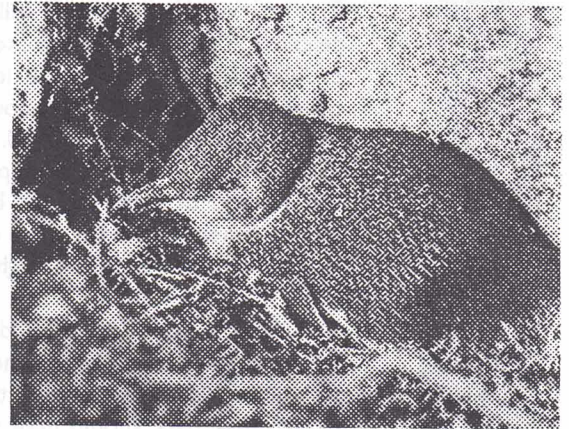
The World

WWF has made a study on how people are wrecking this world of ours. Their estimate is that humans have destroyed thirty percent of the natural world since 1970. Mostly lipservice is paid to sustainability with little real action.

Our freshwater resources has doubled in human use since 1960 with most losses in irrigation schemes. Why governments cannot enforce drip feed irrigation puzzles our Society as we pass fields with sprays losing much of the water to the air rather than the soil.

In terms of consumption people in the United States, Singapore and Taiwan are the most voracious consumers. Our old friend Dr. Norman Myers states, "as the world becomes economically richer it becomes environmentally poorer". You may remember we helped Norman to come to Australia and address our Society some years ago.

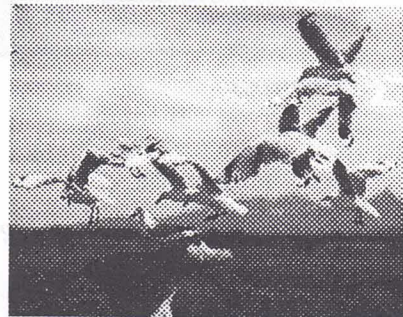
Penguin Island



Fairy Penguin

This is a place secure in my affection. Sixty years ago three of us began to make the first movie film on fairy penguins which nest on this island. Later we began studies on silver gulls and discovered these had a double breeding season on this island at least though later we found the pattern was common wherever food was plentiful.

Also we studied the bridled tern which migrate from south-east Asia to begin breeding in October.



Silver Gulls



Bridled Terns

The island had a chequered conservation history. Today most fortunately it is managed by CALM with board walks to allow humans to visit and study the wildlife without damaging what they come to see. Pigeons are increasing and competing with terns for nesting sites. Their numbers should be culled immediately during the nesting season. This would not harm those homing pigeons beloved of their human owners though for most of us pigeons in cities and suburbs are more like 'feathered rats'. However, a homer in healthy plumage is a delightful sight.

Longline Fishing

This harvesting method still kills too many seabirds in particular albatrosses and petrels. The problem is that when the baited line is thrown overboard it floats for long enough for seabirds to become attracted and hooked. Nigel Brothers of Tasmania has developed a simple, cheap and better method of throwing out baited lines which saves a fisherman money since every bird hooked means one less fish to be caught.

Our fishery inspectors should check boats and any fisherman lacking the Brothers' or some other suitable device such as weighted lines or those fishing after dark should have their licenses cancelled after one warning.



Albatross

Clearfelling and Selective Logging

Our Society for forty years has opposed clearfelling, urging we should return to the old ways of selective logging which does no permanent harm to the forest.

Gradually the world is catching up. Scandinavia has led the way with the knowledge they have lost eighty percent of their original biodiversity through clearfelling.

Now the New Scientist of 5 September 1998 has found the same is true of tropical forests. However the article points out that if settlers follow the logging roads the damage will be permanent.

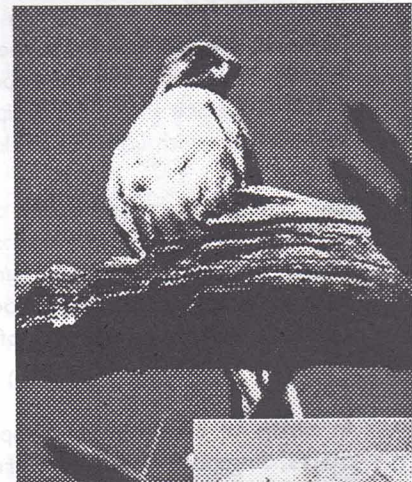
This is so obvious as to be silly. The same is even more true of a clearfelled forest. Here the farmer finds his task even easier since all plant competition has been removed!

However, we still find it difficult to convince all our fellow conservationists. The National Parks Journal kindly published a letter of mine on the need for a more exact description and not use words like 'logging' which can mean very little.

My letter had a footnote from the president stating he was opposed to 'mechanised logging'. Since the days of bullock teams are now over any felling of trees includes the use of mechanical power to take the logs to the mill!

Birds of Prey and Calicivirus

Birds Australia has been studying the impact on such rabbit eating birds but has been unable to gather any significant information except of course an expected drop in numbers of those species which depend largely on rabbits for food. Brown falcons are in this group as well as wedgetail eagles though their apparent increase may be due to the number of road kills since carrion is a great standby for birds using road kills as a handy larder.



Brown Falcon



Wedgetail Eagle

Currawongs at Mosman

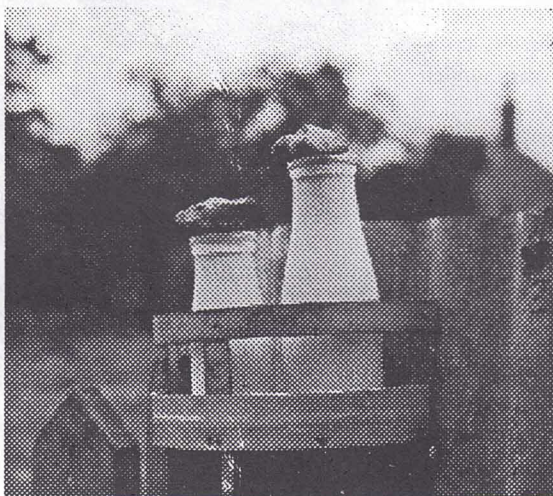
An excellent documentary put this bird into a new light for many watchers. Not for birdlovers since many years ago the great ornithologist Neville Cayley called it the 'worst bird pest in Royal National Park' taking a heavy toll of small birds and their eggs.

In the film scientist Dr. Harry Recher documented the rise of the bird in urban areas and in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald some years ago suggested we should 'cull' half a million each year until the problem is solved.

There is no doubt about the facts Harry described. My only objection is his solution. Most Sydney folk like the bird with its beautiful song. The very name 'currawong' is sonorous and the bell like chorus in winter is one of the pleasures of city gardens.

As Dr. Recher pointed out, much of the problem has arisen because of kind-hearted folk feeding birds. Interfering with nature is rarely wise and though an occasional handout does little permanent harm too regular feeding can cause major changes. Not that currawongs only eat blue wrens and honeyeaters, they also tackle larger prey such as ringtail possums, rats and blue-tongue lizards as well as privet and lily pilly berries since this species accepts most food items including rubbish scattered by humans in parks and gardens.

Should we kill switch the natural balance?



Detering currawongs from sipping cream from milk bottles. The stones stop the birds from drinking the top of the milk.

That path is a dangerous one. Noisy miners drive most other small and sometimes larger birds away. Kookaburras eat young birds as well as snakes. Introduced into Western Australia nearly a hundred years ago there is often a demand by birdlovers an open season should be declared.

As our most popular bird no action has ever been taken by the authorities, wisely in my opinion.

As far as urban gardens are concerned the greatest danger to bird life are domestic cats. Slowly councils around Australia are demanding a solution to this problem, the best being a curfew to stop their pets hunting at dawn and dusk.

Is there any time and place where action should be taken?

North of newcastle lies Cabbage Tree Island, where Australia's rarest seabird breeds.

Once it was there in thousands but no more.

The story of destruction is the classic one. It was described by Dr. Priddel and Nicholas Carlile who worked on the island for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, the prime protector of all our wildlife.

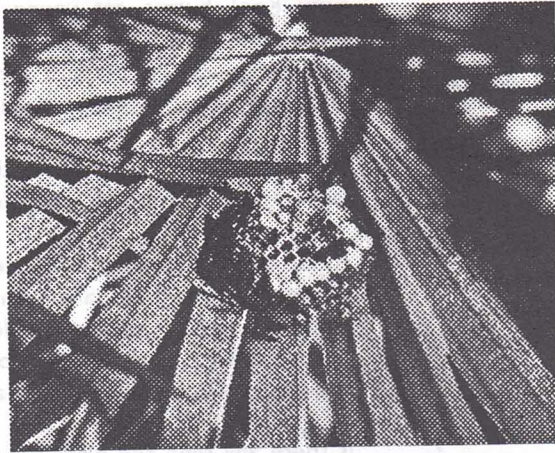
The sad story began when some idiot released rabbits on the island. This greatest of all enemies of our wild creatures and plants destroyed the understorey and made the rainforest more open. This brought the petrels into contact with the infamous birdlime tree. All those plants in nesting area were killed so the petrels had that danger removed.

The rabbits had changed the rainforest into open forest well suited to currawongs. So action was taken to control this bird pest which was killing petrel chicks. So a programme was begun to kill this pest on that particular island.

Success has come with three hundred youngsters surviving each year.

A steady attack has been made on the primary cause, the rabbit. Because the island is so rugged getting rid of the last animal is difficult. However, wildlife authorities have removed them from most islands around Australia so I am sure they will succeed. Then as the years pass the island will gradually return to its golden age. Another of the many success victories of which we read so little. Disasters are more attractive to the media.

Paper Nest Wasps



Paper nest wasp colony under a palm leaf.

These are common in south-eastern Australia and until after World War 2 missing from the south-west. It is believed they moved to the west from nests built on war time machinery sold to developers. Now they are well established, not an uncommon occurrence. Other invaders are rainbow lorikeets, possibly starting as cagebird escapees, starlings usually shot out before they become established, rabbits which hopped across under their own steam. There are probably dozens more among plant invaders.

Paper nest wasps begin with a mated queen which has sheltered during the winter in a suitable crevice. The new colony soon builds with plentiful food since these wasps are devourers of other insects so can be counted as a friend of the gardener. There are some thirty five different kinds of native paper nest wasps. All very different creatures from the fearsome European wasp which has invaded our shores.

Sea Lions Also Known As Hair Seals

These magnificent creatures found from the Abrolhos Islands in the west, south along the coast to Kangaroo Island in the east is estimated to consist of 14,000 individuals making it one of the rarest of the world's thirty five known species.

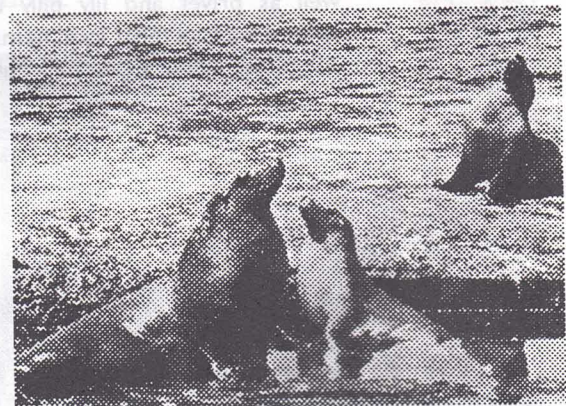
What is worse some unknown factor is killing many of the young. Since the life span is said to be 23 years any drop in total numbers can be unsuspected until too late. Major enemies include white pointer sharks and killer whales. The latter seem to be increasing but possibly a more dangerous enemy are human fishermen whose nets do trap

sea lions. Also stupid fisher folk tend to regard all seals as enemies since they eat fish so any drop in their harvesting can be blamed on the seals.

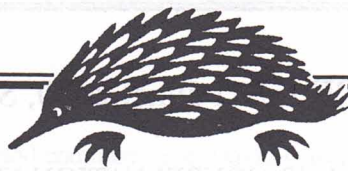
The unique breeding pattern where females give birth every eighteen months after a gestation period of about nine months is surprising. Bulls weigh about 300 kilograms far more than the smaller females at 100 kilograms. He needs to have the size and weight to defend his harem of about 90 females.

To be charged by a large male as I have been is a frightening experience as happened to me on an island in the Recherche. Even the smaller female defending her pup can give a nasty bite and my backward leap one morning saved me from this experience but the jump broke a bone in my foot. However, humans are in no danger normally though sometimes tourists are bitten through coming too close to mothers protecting young.

It is good to know that fishermen are co-operating in a new study on this little known member of our marine mammals. Certainly it is a valuable tourist asset since on Kangaroo Island a large colony can be studied in safety. It is reached by a board walk lead from the road, through the dunes to a beach house where family parties lie dozing in the sunshine.



Sea lion group.



WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC.

GPO BOX 3428 SYDNEY NSW 1043

CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER - Progress Report - No. 4/1998

“EARTH 2000”

“In wildness is the preservation of the world... ”

Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862)

A Conference on Australia's Conservation Future



Many rainforest areas in Australia are now endangered ecosystems.

A major international conference on conservation
to stimulate a world-wide interest in conserving our wildlife.

To be held in Sydney, Australia in the year 2000 prior to the Olympic Games.

EARTH 2000 CONFERENCE - 3-11 June, 2000, Sydney, Australia

'A CONFERENCE ON AUSTRALIA'S CONSERVATION FUTURE'

The following speakers have agreed to come to the EARTH 2000 Conference commencing in June 2000.

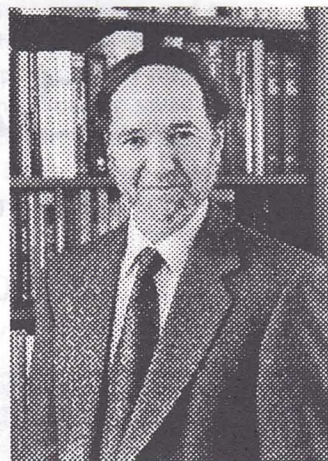
Professor Jared Diamond

Department of Physiology, UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA.

For Australians Jared will be best known for a paper he gave at an international Birds Australia conference which outlined ideas for national park design to keep maximum diversity on his experience from studies in New Guinea.

His fascinating book, "The Third Chimpanzee" made him known to a wider audience than the scientific community while his latest publication, "Guns, Germs and Steel" has had wide critical acclaim in the United States. His published papers include studies in a variety of fields, ranging from physiology to chemistry with a number on popular science.

Being awarded the Skeptics Randi award in 1994 will indicate something of his versatility.



Dr. Graham Harris

As head of the natural sciences of the CSIRO Land and Water Division will give some measure of his abilities. His comments to the media on the topic of land erosion which he termed 'the forgotten disaster', a theme our Society has pressed for more than forty years, decided our inviting him to address the EARTH 2000 Conference.

He considers erosion of our rivers, lakes and soils and forests as being more important to our more immediate future than global warming. It is why he has called for a global campaign similar to that waged regarding climate change and ozone depletion are needed. No doubt that will be one of his messages to the conference delegates.

Australia is well placed to lead such a venture as few other nations have our experience in managing fragile landscapes.

Associate Professor David Goldney

Charles Sturt University

Unless we can convince farmers to care for the country our future is bleak. David as head of the Environmental Studies Unit at Charles Sturt University has wide experience with the farming community. As a landscape ecologist his major interest is in the integration of nature conservation and production agriculture.

We all like to eat, though at times the more rabid conservationists tend to forget that imperative. He also has wider interests including a study of platypus ecology as well as other endangered vertebrates.

In 1996, he was awarded the NSW Environmental Award for his outstanding contribution to environmental education in this State, a field in which I, as your president, am particularly interested.



Dr. David Given

As a self-employed consultant, researcher and communicator, David is well placed to offer as his challenge, 'Can we afford another century like the twentieth century in terms of its costs to bio-diversity?'. As Chair of the plant section of the Species Survival Commission of the World Conservation Union, the world's largest group in terms of national spread, he is well placed to give a stimulating answer.

With more than two hundred research papers including global treatment of plant conservation his should be a stimulating keynote address. He has won awards for his work in plant conservation and is also a Fellow of the Linnean Society of London. We heard the two David's speaking at a plant conservation conference in Coff's Harbour NSW and look forward to hearing more.

Sir Robert May FRS

Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Government and Head of the Office of Science and Technology

Many years ago I had the pleasure of sharing the platform with Robert when we spoke on some conservation battle of the past. He has held chairs in both zoology and mathematics and at present holds the chair of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum of London, a place of which I have fond memories.

He has been Chief Scientific Adviser to governments of both political persuasions and is a gifted speaker. Honours include the Crafoord Prize, the ecological equivalent of the Nobel Prize which is worth \$500,000 and is intended to complement the Nobel Prize.

He was also awarded a British Knighthood in 1998 but of more significance to Australians, a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1998.

The title of his talk is a fascinating one. "How many species – past, present and likely future?"



Professor W.D. (Bill) Williams

Professor of Zoology, University of Adelaide

I use that more familiar term with this scientist whom I have known for many years. Based in the University of Adelaide it is obvious why in this driest of our states he has become an expert in the ecology of desert waters, particularly salt lakes.

With the present interest in Lake Eyre which conservation groups have been urging deserves world heritage listing, so far with no success, he may discuss our desert wetlands.

The title of his talk, "Wetlands in the drier parts of the world: important and significant but largely forgotten elements of the biosphere; their conservation and management."

His address should complement that of Dr. Graham Harris



Professor Ray Specht

One of Australia's leading botanists and well known in world circles for a number of plant aspects, I first met Ray when the World Wide Fund for Nature decided he should be asked to study the western division of Queensland, sadly lacking at the time any reserves. He was famous at the time for his persistent demand Australia should take urgent action to conserve all major plant communities, equally urgent today and he will emphasise this need at the conference.

Although the political climate of the time did not allow WWF to make much progress with such reserves, his reports helped educate the civil servants, who when politics changed, were able to take appropriate action.

Ray although a giant among botanists is a modest man but hopefully his address at the conference will stir governments into action.



Dr. Keith Suter

President, UNAA (NSW) Association

His is a voice well known to experts in his field but little known to the general public. We first met when organising a UN Year of the Tree which later grew into Greening Australia.

Dedicated to peace and the United Nations, he is President of the United Nations Association (NSW). He has worked on many advisory committees for governments wherever peace or social justice is involved and his broadcasts on the ABC and 2GB has made him known as an expert voice speaking on such topics.

Besides many articles, he has written three books, essential reading for any conservationist wanting a deeper understanding of the world of politics. "Global Change" describes the often bewildering world of ours particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Global Agenda" enables any person to understand the world of today as well as the important role of the United Nations. It is easy for cynics to emphasise its weakness in certain fields but it is the essential keystone to world peace. Without it the world would be the poorer. At this conference Keith will range widely but hopefully discuss the question of Antarctica. Who actually owns it? Who should own it? What happens here may be a touchstone of what can happen to the rest of the world.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

EARTH 2000 Conference

Executive Steering Committee - President: Vincent Serventy AM, Tel: 043 44 4708

Preliminary work will be funded by the Society, but we would welcome any donations either privately or from commercial or government agencies which will be held in a special EARTH 2000 Conference Trust Fund.

Pre - Conference Newsletter

Special Progress Reports will be published from time to time to keep people informed of Conference developments and keynote speakers. You can be added to the Mailing List by sending a cheque for \$20 together with your details to: The Secretary, EARTH 2000 CONFERENCE, WILDLIFE PRESERVATION SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC., GPO Box 3428, SYDNEY NSW 1043. Tel/Fax: 02 9556 1537.

For Parents and Teachers

Fifty years ago when studying for my Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Western Australia, I found reference to research by an American psychologist, J. S. Roe, who carried out a study on one hundred leading scientists in the United States.



The bad old days. Boy with slingshot in search of a victim.

Her question. What was the main stimulus which set you on your scientific career?

In all cases it was due either to a respected teacher or to a project stimulated by such a teacher which gave them a taste for research they never lost.

What of my own experience?

I have taught at every level from kindergarten to tertiary.



Catching them young. Gould league students.

Case one. The first way of teaching by example. My daughter Natasha at the age of three cried out angrily at a truck driver who backed his vehicle over a seedling gum tree, crushing it.

"You bad man!" He was stunned thinking, he must have run over a pet dog or cat, not an insignificant plant.

We had never talked about conservation to her but by example we had lived conservation, so she caught it from us.

Case two. The second way by offering a challenge to discover something new.

Forty years ago I was teaching a class of twenty, twenty boys and girls. A pair of willy wagtails were feeding a cuckoo chick in a nest in the school yard. I suggested to the class we should do an all-day study on the behaviour of the foster parents, noting what food was brought and any other interesting items.

I loaned my binoculars, the school provided a large pad and the children their enthusiasm. A roster was drawn up, the first two children coming at six am and the last pair at five pm.

The next day they showed me the pad, almost full of detailed notes.

I asked if there was anyone in the class of ten year olds willing to analyse the notes and produce a report for the class.

A forest of hands and I chose one boy.

A few days later he produced the report, I praised him and as promised, published it in Gould League notes of which I was the editor and sent him a copy.

Twenty years passed and at a social gathering two adults approached. They asked, "Do you remember an all-day study in the Claremont school grounds with wagtails and a cuckoo?"

"Yes", I replied.

"Well, that study changed our son's life. He asked us if what he had done was the kind of work scientists did?"

We assured him it was and he said, "I'm going to be a scientist". Up to that time he had little interest in school but he became a keen student and went on to do a science degree and was now working for the Victorian National Parks and Wildlife Service.



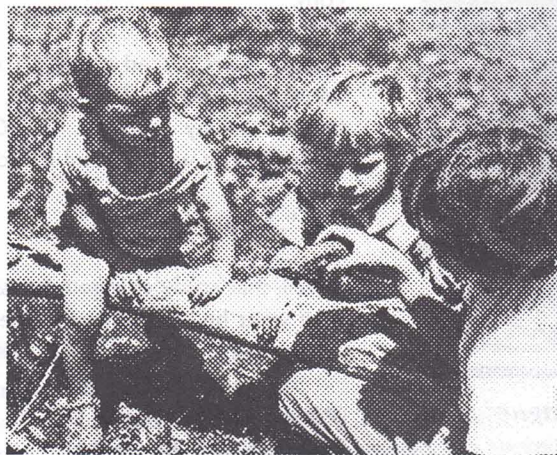
Wildlife shows. Your president very many years ago showing a school group a bearded dragon lizard at a wildlife show.

Case three. Important in all teaching.

One year ago I had a letter from a student of mine many years before at Perth Modern School. She was fourteen years old at the time and years later when studying for her science degree, was asked to describe any experiment from her school days which had stuck in her mind. She had written the story of an experiment showing the power of air pressure during which a kerosene tin was crushed in front of the class.

She added to it, also watching my own face, filled with delight at the delight of the class, at the success of the experiment, that had made her remember it.

The point of good teaching. Make as many experiments as possible, exciting and communicate your excitement to the class.



The Serventy children on nature walkabout, the first of the popular television shows Carol and Vincent pioneered.

Good teachers must be well trained and treated as the treasures they are. In all the classes described, these were small. Only twenty students. The smaller the class the more effective the teaching in most situations.

So towards the end of my own teaching life, I remember Tennyson's poem Ulysses.

'Death closes all but something ere to the end
Some work of noble note may still be done.'

My work of noble note is fighting to conserve the Australian environment and educate the major tools—good teachers, good parents and all children.

Alex Griffiths Valedictory

Dr. Alexander Morris Griffiths.

We are assembled here today to pay our respects and to show our appreciation for a truly remarkable man, Alex Griffiths.

Alex and the world renowned Currumbin Sanctuary he created are an integral part of Gold Coast history.

The story of the Sanctuary and its famous lorikeets has been told in thousands of newspaper articles, magazines and books and has been translated into many languages.

In 1956, the Sanctuary was given a valuable publicity boost, when the National Geographic Magazine featured it in a 9 page spread.

Literally millions of tourists passed through its gates, as many as 60,000 in a single year in the 1970's. The benefits of this influx flowed on to the whole Gold Coast area. Alex should be recognised as a pioneer of tourism. But it is for his contributions to conservation and wildlife preservation for which he has been honoured and for which he is best remembered.

Back in the 1940's Alex had the foresight to recognise the urgent need to preserve strategic areas of wilderness.

Whenever Sanctuary funds permitted the top priority was to purchase properties of adjoining land to enlarge the Sanctuary. Fifty-eight extra acres were acquired in this manner.



Dr. Alex Griffith, OAM, at his home.

Alex also purchased Coolamon, a 44 acre environmental park, buying as he could afford it, a section at a time. His stated aims were:

1. To preserve something precious for people to enjoy and for future generations;
 2. To keep access open to the Nicoll Rainforest
- Alex's successful campaign to have this rainforest declared a National park was backed up by leading environmental scientists. 87 different species of birds were identified in the Coolamon/Nicoll Rainforest area by ornithologist Graham Pizzey.

Even the land on which we now stand was bought by Alex and will remain as it is, undeveloped.

When the Coolangatta Airport was being planned, Alex was actively involved in preventing a vital area of Currumbin hill from being excavated.

Alex has been involved in numerous other activities to protect sensitive areas from being destroyed.

He was also good with the pen and voiced his concerns via the press.

For his work in the field of conservation and wildlife protection, in 1976 Alex was awarded the Order of Australia. In 1977 the Order of the White Cross was bestowed on him for the protection of wildlife and 1989 the Gold Coast City Council honoured him along with David Fleay by extending to these two great Australians the Freedom of Gold Coast City.

Then in 1995 Alex's efforts were again recognised when he received a citation from Griffith University. He was admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of the University.

Alex was the 2nd eldest of 5 children born to Leonard and Catherine Griffiths in Wellington, New Zealand. He was never very strong, due, he feels, to a dose of lead poisoning when he was a baby.

Leonard took his family to Norfolk Island in 1927 where he grew bananas for the Sydney Markets. He was also an auctioneer and Alex recalls how the islanders just loved those auctions.

1935 saw the family in Queensland, Townsville then Brisbane and then in 1942 they bought a cottage at Currumbin on 2.5 acres of blady grass.

Alex and his father grew gladioli and Alex also kept bees.

The nearby bush teemed with birdlife and the story is well known of how those pesky lorikeets would decapitate his gladdies to get at the nectar. Alex tells of coming out and finding the blooms on the ground. There would not be one whole red flower left in the entire garden, he tells.

A compromise was reached and the birds left the gladdies alone in return for plates of honey and water served up on the back lawn.

Folk who came to buy, lingered to watch the amusing antics of these gorgeous little acrobats. Lorikeets can be real clowns when they're having fun, and the onlookers were dazzled and delighted. More birds came and more people came to see them.

The honey and flowers took a back seat. The lorikeets were the star performers and wasn't it fitting that these exquisite birds for whom Alex had such a special fondness were to determine his destiny.

To defray the costs of providing so much honey for them a rustic kiosk was built and light refreshments and Devonshire teas were served under the trees.

The gates of the Sanctuary were opened in 1947. Entry was free until November 1974 when a 20 cent entry fee was charged. With only those 2.5 acres of blady grass to begin with, the Sanctuary was virtually built up from the ground.

There was very little capital but Alex had something more valuable. He was highly intelligent, resourceful and a perfectionist.

Although he was a gentle and unassuming man, he possessed great tenacity of purpose and would unswervingly strive for the goals that he constantly set for himself. One of his greatest assets was a keen and infectious sense of humour.

Alex toiled for 30 years, working 16 hour days and 365 day years, and in his own words "loved every minute of it". He was a quiet achiever. Asked why he never married, he would reply that he was married to the Sanctuary.

Never interested in material possessions and having no family, he totally dedicated himself to the development of his beloved Sanctuary. The Sanctuary above all was to be a haven and refuge for wild native creatures.

In his cottage in the Sanctuary grounds for as long as he was physically able, Alex personally tended hurt wild creatures. A visitor would always find several of these little unfortunates being kept warm, fed and tended by Alex. "As you can see", he would explain, "I had to ensure that these little things would always have a safe place to come to, even after I'm gone".

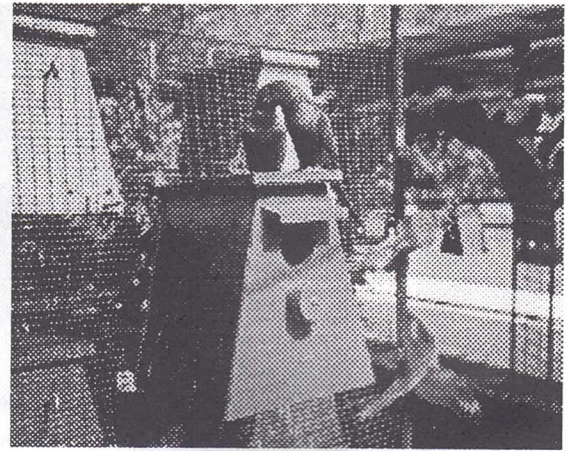
His love of nature and his compassion for wild creatures was reflected in the character of the Sanctuary. It was a place with a difference - a place of beauty and peace where native birds and animals roamed at will. The grounds were spacious and huge stands of native trees gave shelter to countless birds.

Picnic tables and seats were scattered throughout the grounds with barbecue facilities. There was a special relaxed atmosphere about the Sanctuary which people liked.

Revenue was generated from within the Sanctuary and from appreciation boxes. Always enterprising, Alex had the first espresso coffee machine on the Gold Coast. Its tantalising aroma would stop many a passer by in their tracks and entice them in.

The Rock Shop was also a first - the first in Australia. The photography shop with its Kodak franchise sold cameras, film etc.

The then new \$212,000 kiosk sold an enormous range of tempting items and souvenirs. The bakery was a great favourite with its pies, cakes and pastries. Sweets were made on the premises. There was also a Golden Casket Agency, local fruit, pot plants, honey combs. You could find all manner of wares at the Sanctuary.



The Sanctuary boasted a miniature scale model railway system with 2 locomotives, each capable of transporting 96 passengers around. They would wind their way past displaying peacocks, past the waterfowl contentedly preening on the banks of the lagoon, then through a specially constructed tunnel under the highway to the western reserve.

There were many other items of interest throughout the Sanctuary but the highlight of the visit was the feeding of the lorikeets. The pleasure that people felt was reflected in their faces as they waited in eager anticipation, ready with their plates of food. Then the chattering hordes of these unbelievably beautiful creatures would descend and in those days - in their thousands. They would settle on plates, arms and heads - showing no fear and the people loved it.

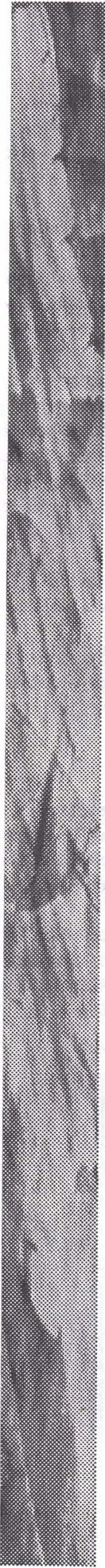
After his brother Max died, Alex became acutely aware of his own mortality and was worried that on his passing, the Sanctuary and Coolamon should end up in the hands of developers.

To ensure that his Sanctuary would always remain a wildlife refuge, Alex in 1976 with justifiable pride, handed over the Currumbin Sanctuary and the Coolamon Reserve to the National Trust of Queensland.

Always the perfectionist, both properties were handed over in immaculate condition.

It is common knowledge that Alex was not happy about certain issues. Nevertheless, he did acknowledge that the Trust has done much that does them credit and in latter times there has been a warm and friendly interaction between Alex and the Sanctuary and staff.

I think he would find that he has many kindred spirits working in the Sanctuary - folk who are drawn to such a place because, like him, they have a genuine love and concern for the welfare of native birds and animals.



Alex was fortunate in that he had many friends and admirers. A staunch friend who did much to raise Alex's spirits and who helped him in many, many ways was the late Robert Neumann.

Had it not been for the toil and dedication of Alex Griffiths, there would be no Currumbin Sanctuary, there would be no Coolamon and hundreds of people over the years would not have had employment.

Nor would the Gold Coast have had the flow on benefits of tourists attracted to the Sanctuary. One thing is certain, future generations will bless Alex Griffiths for the rich legacy he has left us.

He lived for nearly 87 years but like sands through the hour glass his time ran out on the 29th July.

Alex's body may have been tired and worn out, but let us hope that his spirit will soar and be free as a bird.

We salute you Alex

Vale Alex

Rest In Peace.

One of Alex's favourite poems was "Trees"

Trees

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the Earth's sweet flowing breast,
A tree that looks at God all day
And lifts her leafy arms to pray:

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair:
Upon whose bosom snow has lain,
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

1998 AGL Friends of National Parks Conference and Awards

On Saturday, June 27 1998, AGL Friends of National Parks gathered at the Gap Bluff Centre at Watsons Bay for the second AGL Friends of National Parks Conference, followed by the Friends Awards presented by Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment, Mr Pat Rogan.

AGL Friends of National Parks is a program which establishes and supports community groups that want to get involved in caring for their local national park. Groups can also focus on specific nature conservation, endangered species, Aboriginal or historic heritage projects.

This year the AGL Friends Groups will share and celebrate their achievements in caring and raising funds for their local national parks and wildlife. There are now Friend Groups across the state supporting local national parks and wildlife. In the first year following the establishment of the program, the AGL Friends Groups have had some outstanding achievements including:

- Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue secured \$100,000 government grant to establish a program across the state to remove rare and native plants from building sites and transplant or return them after construction is completed.
- Towra Point Friends uniting government and the community groups for the protection of Botany Bay and Towra Point Nature Reserve from pollution and impact from development.
- Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby have now raised more than \$50,000 and with the local community have invested thousands of hours in an effort to save rock wallabies through the control of feral animals.
- Friends of Lane Cove established an outstanding web site with information and updates.

Such is the enthusiasm of these dedicated national park supporters that a group recently had a holiday with a difference by providing their own funds to go to Lord Howe island for a week of back breaking weeding and regeneration.

This level of commitment was rewarded at the 1998 AGL Friends Awards with the announcement of Rymil Abell as 1998 Friend of the Year. Mr Abell, a committed environmentalist, has been a bushcare volunteer at Lane Cove NP since 1991

and coordinated the Friends of Lane Cove National Park expedition to the World Heritage Listed Lord Howe island. (A full list of Award winners follows).

AGL Friends of National Parks was established after the 1994 bush fires when people demonstrated concern and offered to help repair and restore their local national parks. As numbers of regular helpers grew it became apparent that there was a need to help groups of people that wanted practical involvement in national park and wildlife projects.

"There are many people with a real interest in their local community and environment" said Mikla Lewis, 1997 Friend of the Year. "The funds, support and recognition that we get through the AGL Friends program helps us harness this goodwill and energy to provide support for our national parks and wildlife."

The AGL Friends of National Parks Program was developed as a joint initiative between the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, AGL and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service with funds provided by AGL contributing to a coordinator, start up kits, the annual Conference and Awards.

"We are delighted to partner community groups in a program which directly benefits our remarkable national parks and wildlife" said AGL Group General Manager, Energy Sales and Marketing, Mr Michael Fraser.

"We thank AGL leading this ground breaking community initiative with the Foundation and the local community to contribute to the care and protection of our natural and cultural heritage" said Michelle Dunn, Chief Executive, Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife.



Patrick and Suzanne Medway at the Annual Award Dinner with the Foundation.

AGL Friends of National Parks Award Winners for 1998 were:

1998 Award for Excellence in Public Relations Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service

- for outstanding media coverage of their work via press, radio and television.

1998 Award for Excellence in Public Education Friends of Lane Cove National Park

- for establishing a remarkable web site which provides regular updates of their work and conservation issues within Lane Cove National Park.

1998 Award for Excellence in Fundraising Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service

- for the scope and variety of fundraising activities and for innovative approach to State Government which resulted in \$100,000 over three years to pilot the Wildplant Rescue concept for whole state.

1998 Award for Excellence in Conservation Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (Kangaroo Valley/Shoalhaven)

- for vital feral control on private land to protect small colonies of Brush-tailed Rock-wallabies which has resulted in increasing sightings and survival of young.

Highly Commended

Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve

- for outstanding effort to protect and conserve fragile wetlands and water bird habitat at the Ramsar listed Towra Point site in Botany Bay.

The four awards above are for outstanding achievement by an AGL Friends of National Parks group acting as a whole on behalf of their community for the benefit of the environment.



Patrick Medway receiving a High Commendation from Pat Rogan, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment.

1998 NPWS Friend of the Year (for NPWS staff)

Trevor Prowse

- nominated by Friends of Lane Cove National Park for his consistent high level of support for the Friends and other community organisations working in conjunction with Lane Cove NP (almost 300 regular volunteers).

Highly Commended:

Ian Jackett

- nominated by Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby for his work coordinating private land holders and the Friends group in their efforts.

Cath Ireland

- nominated by Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service and Blue Mountains Rare & Endangered Species Group for her untiring, cheerful support of several community groups and activities in the Blue Mountains region.

1998 AGL Friend of the Year

(for outstanding individual effort)

Rymill Abell

- nominated by Friends of Lane Cove National Park for single handedly arranging and coordinating a trip by 23 bush regenerators to World Heritage Listed Lord Howe Island to undertake weed eradication and bush regeneration work.

Highly Commended

Bernie Clarke

- nominated by Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve for his lifetime as conservation warrior on behalf of the Botany Bay area.

Pat Jordan

- nominated by Friends of Morton National Park - Bundanoon for her untiring efforts to publicise and support the group in their activities and her work with educating local children about environmental issues.

The 2 Awards above are for outstanding effort by an individual which epitomises the ethos of the Friends of National Parks concept and extends the work of the group.

Contacts for Individual Friends Groups

Friends of the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby

Susan Robertson

(02) 4465 1055

Friends of Lane Cove National Park

Margaret Reidy

(02) 9419 4441

Blue Mountains Wildplant Rescue Service

Mikla Lewis

(02) 4787 6391

Blue Mountains Rare & Endangered Species Group

Margaret Turton

(02) 4757 3149

Friends of Morton National Park - Bundanoon

Marea Higgins

(02) 4883 6534

Toni Matthews

(02) 4883 6852

Friends of Towra Point Nature Reserve

Patrick Medway

(02) 9556 1537

For further information about joining or establishing a Friends Group please contact Jo Ridley, Coordinator, AGL Friends of National Parks on (02) 9337 3388 or (015) 886 366

The Temptation to Translocate: The Real Story

By Murray B. Hunt

'The history of translocations of native vertebrates (in South Australia) is a long and, until recently, a mostly sorry tale. Although all may have been well intentioned, few translocations appear to have been carefully planned and considerations of the consequences have been minimal. Only a small percentage have been successful in terms of establishing self-perpetuating populations, and even several of these have doubtful medium to longer-term viability'. Copley (1994)

Mankind loves to reintroduce species possibly because it feels like a small, but positive, step in trying to maintain biological diversity and to 'help out Nature'. However, due to the relatively low success rate, the inexplicable nature of past successes and failures, and the potential for further environmental damage, careful consideration of the merit of a particular release needs to take place before it is performed.

The above quote indicates that contrary to popular belief the relocation of organisms from captivity or from another area to the wild usually isn't very easy. Furthermore, foolhardy suggestions by proponents of a particular translocation citing the success of another type of translocation should not be heeded. For example, the arguments of proponents of a proposed translocation of native animals to an area in which they used to exist, citing the ease at which rabbits were established within Australia is next to meaningless. These are different translocations and are surrounded by different ecological effects.



Councillor Murray Hunt at the RSPCA Conference in Canberra on Wildlife Rehabilitation with Gyeltshen Durpa, a Forestry Officer from Butan.

Types of Translocations

Hunter (1996) suggests that releases of animals to the wild can be of three types: **introducing** organisms to environments where they previously have not existed; **reintroducing** organisms to environments where they have become locally extinct or extirpated; or to **augment** existing populations that are very small by adding individuals obtained elsewhere.

Examples of **introductions** are the release of the exotic rabbit to the Australian continent, and the movement of the koala to Kangaroo Island where it previously did not exist. Introductions, as can be seen by the ecological problems now facing Kangaroo Island, are fraught with danger in that the introduced population of animals may be able to take advantage of a non-hostile or naive environment and increase in size beyond the carrying capacity of the area. In the past, attempts to control the effects of previous deleterious introductions have included the further introduction of new organisms which, in many cases, leads to further deleterious effects. An example of the above scenario was the introduction of ferrets to areas of New Zealand to control introduced rats with the combined effect leading to the extinction of many of New Zealand birds.

A well known example of the **reintroduction** of animals to areas where they previously occurred is seen in the operation of Earth Sanctuaries where animals still living in other parts of Australia (usually in the west) have been translocated to protected areas where they have become extinct. An example of the **augmentation** of an existing population, but not in the strict sense implied by Hunter (1996) is the release of rehabilitated Brush-tailed Possums (by WIRES) into areas in which they already live.

It is suggested that **introductions** should rarely, if ever, be performed, and that our aim in relocating or releasing organisms should be to recreate or promote the historic range of a species or community of species within an area. Intentional introductions in the future should be limited to species-specific viruses, in attempts to control previous deleterious introductions. (A note to gardeners, do the introduced plants in your garden have the potential to spread and form a viable wild population?)

Conditions for Greater Likelihood of Translocation Success

In the past, the success and failure of translocations has largely been inexplicable. However, Griffith et al. (1989) in a review of intentional translocations of animals from 1973 to 1986, identified the following factors to be associated with translocation success (the production of a self-sustaining population).

- Native game species were more likely to successfully be translocated than were threatened or endangered species.
- Increased habitat quality was associated with greater success.
- Translocations into the core of species historical ranges were more successful than were those on the periphery of or outside historic ranges.
- Herbivores were more likely to be successfully translocated than either carnivores or omnivores.
- Translocations into areas with potential competitors or similar life form were less successful than translocations into areas without competitors or areas with a congeneric potential competitor.
- Early breeders with large clutches were slightly more likely to be successfully translocated than were species that bred late and had small clutches.
- Translocations of wild caught animals were also more likely to succeed than translocations of captive bred animals.

Variable	Translocations	Success (%)
Threatened, endangered species	80	44
Native game	118	86
Release area habitat		
Excellent	63	84
Good	98	69
Fair or poor	32	38
Location or release		
Core or historic	133	76
Periphery or outside	54	48
Wild-caught	163	75
Captive-reared	34	38
Adult food habit		
Carnivore	40	48
Herbivore	145	77
Omnivore	13	38
Early breeder, large clutch	102	75
Late breeder, small clutch	96	62
Potential competitors		
Congeneric	39	72
Similar	48	52
Neither	105	75

Intuitive considerations suggest that success is also more likely when the number of founders is large, there is high genetic diversity among founders, there is low variance in the rate of increase and reduced environmental variation. The controlling of limiting factors, such as the eradication or control of predators and the training of captive reared animals are also considered prerequisites of a successful translocation.

However, surprisingly, Griffith et al. (1989) did not find any consistent association of translocation success with number of releases, habitat improvement, whether the release was hard (no food and shelter provided on site) or soft, immediate or delayed release on site, or average physical condition of animals at release.

Conclusion

Despite the overwhelming urge to just go out and do it, the above considerations, and others reported elsewhere in this magazine, should urge for caution and careful thought before any proposed translocation. Conversely, if translocations in the name of conservation are not based on careful research and planning, the end results of our hard work may be unsuccessful translocations. Furthermore, if we continue to condone introductions of species to areas outside their historical range, a myriad of further environmental problems can be expected.

Copley, P.B. (1994) *Translocations of native vertebrates in South Australia: a review*. In *Reintroduction Biology of Australian and New Zealand Fauna* ed by M. Serena. Surrey Beatty and Sons.

Griffith, B., J.M. Scott, J.W. Carpenter, and C. Reed (1989) *Translocation as a Species Conservation Tool: Status and Strategy*. *Science* 245: 477-80

Hunter, M.L. (1996) *Fundamentals of Conservation Biology*. Blackwell Science.



Letters to the Editor

4th May
Dear Pam,

What can we or the Government do to protect the indiscriminate land clearing and native forest which is the habitat of our rare and endangered and scarce wildlife?

How can we prevent the use of hunting dogs in National Parks?

What is NPWS doing to reduce the road kill of wildlife rate in National Parks?

Why has the NPWS budget allocation of \$2-3 million per annum been the same for over a decade, for the acquisition of high conservation valued privately owned lands to be added to the national park estate in NSW?

Why has the RACF Forestry Assessment stalled since November 1997? Can you promise that the assessment of the 4 key coastal assessments can be completed and gazzeted as National Parks before the end of 1998?

Yours Sincerely,

John Clarke

10 August, 1998
Mr John Clarke

Dear John,

I refer to your letter of 4 May 1998 concerning various environmental matters. I apologise for the delay in responding. I have set out some information below which addresses the particular issues you have raised.

1. Natural Habitat Protection

Protection of habitat from continuing agricultural expansion on private land was a driving force behind the Government's review of rural land clearing legislation and the subsequent introduction of the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act, 1997*, which is administered by the Department of Land and Water Conservation.

In addition, there are many other ways in which this Government has been trying to improve natural habitat protection in NSW. The *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act) was a result of the Government's recognition of the

need to protect threatened species' habitats from continued expansion and development. The Act operates within the development planning system and requires local Councils, and any other agencies which assess development applications, to rigorously consider the potential impacts of proposed developments on listed threatened species. The Director General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) now has an important role in the development approval process in cases where threatened species may be affected.

Since elected in March 1995, this Government has also established over 40 new national parks and reserves in NSW and increased the size of many others. There are now more than 100 National Parks in NSW which, along with the many Nature Reserves, State Recreation Areas and Regional Parks, now cover around six per cent of the State. The flora and fauna in these areas will always be protected.

The Government is also supporting the many programs being undertaken by the NPWS to increase the scientific knowledge of native animals, to control feral animals and to prevent and control bushfires, in order that native species can receive greater protection from the various threats to their survival.

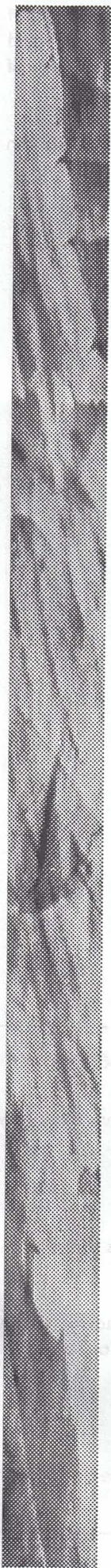
2. Hunting Dogs in National Parks

As you would be aware, all domestic animals are prohibited from national parks and reserves, with the exception of dogs that provide a service to the disabled and horses that are used on recognised riding trails. You can be assured that NPWS field staff who encounter any other domestic animal being brought into a national park or reserve will exercise their power to ensure the removal of such animals and issue infringement notices.

If you are aware of any particular incidents involving the use of hunting dogs in national parks, the Manager of the relevant NPWS District would be eager to receive further details.

3. Deaths of Wildlife due to Vehicles in National Parks

The NPWS is aware of the problem of wildlife deaths due to vehicles in parks and reserves and steps are taken to reduce vehicle deaths in areas where the problem is most severe, particularly where threatened species are involved. The NPWS reduces deaths mainly through traffic control measures such as night-time track closure.



An appropriate example is the closure at night of the gate to North Head in Sydney Harbour National Park, which was recently implemented in an effort to reduce the rate at which Long-nosed Bandicoot are killed by vehicles. This population of 200-350 bandicoots, which is listed under the TSC Act, was estimated to lose around 50 individuals per year due to vehicle deaths appears to have been drastically reduced as a result of closing the gate at night.

4. NPWS Budget

While the NPWS's budget allocation for land acquisitions has remained more or less constant over the past decade, it is important to note that the NPWS acquires substantial areas of land with assistance from other sources, such as the Commonwealth Government, transfers from other State Government departments, various trust arrangements, local councils and even private donations.

The NPWS's overall budget has increased substantially since this Government came to office, in line with the substantially greater area that the NPWS is required to manage.

5. Forestry Reforms

You can be assured that the Government remains committed to the Comprehensive Regional Assessment (CRA) process and the development of Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) for a number of regions in NSW. These processes have been proceeding continuously over the past two years. The results will be used to plan a reserve system which is comprehensive, adequate and representative of all forest types in each region, and to establish principles for ecologically sustainable forest management.

The CRA is intended to assess the biodiversity, social and economic values of all public and private forests in these regions, while the RFA will establish the framework for protecting the irreplaceable conservation features, such as forest ecosystems, old-growth forest areas and significant species, making the present reserve system more viable in size and shape, and with adequate linkages between the various reserves. The RFA will also be designed to leave sufficient timber for an ecologically sustainable forest timber industry, though I will include comprehensive prescriptions for the management of forests which remain outside the reserve system so as to protect old-growth forests and threatened species.

Negotiations for the Eden RFA took place in October and November 1997. These negotiations put forward several options for a reserve system

which is designed to protect the conservation values of the forests while allowing sufficient timber for an ecologically sustainable timber industry. The State Government is currently negotiating with the Commonwealth Government to formalise a reserve design which will protect the significant parts of the South East Forests. As part of that process, the various options put forward in the RFA negotiations are currently on public display for community input and comment.

However, please note that it will not be possible for all the CRAs or the RFAs, including the public exhibition processes, as well as gazettal of any new reserves as a result of these processes, to be completed within the Government's current term of office. RFAs for all regions are not expected to be in place until at least the end of 1999.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Pam Allan MP
Minister for the Environment

24 June, 1998
Mr Vincent Serventy

Dear Vincent,

I refer to your letter dated 4 March 1998 concerning the issue of dog attacks on kangaroos at Maloney's Beach, near Bateman's Bay. I note that you have also written to the Acting Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and I would appreciate it if you would accept this in response to your letter to him.

The Acting Director-General of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has advised me that Maloney's Beach is a residential area near Bateman's Bay which adjoins Murrumbidgee National Park but is not part of the park itself. Accordingly, the management of dogs in this area falls within the responsibility of Eurobodalla Shire Council. Notwithstanding this, the NPWS is in frequent contact with Council staff about the problems of domestic dogs chasing kangaroos and other wildlife in this area.

Until recently, ad hoc camping occurred at Quiriga Beach which is north of Maloney's Beach in the Murrumbidgee National Park. Following the adoption in November 1997 of the Murrumbidgee National Park Plan of Management, camping was restricted in this area.

Sign posting has been installed and regular ranger patrols occur at Quiriga Beach to ensure that camping does not recur and to enforce other regulations such as dog control and unauthorised vehicle access. I am advised that a number of fines have been issued for breaches in park regulations at Quiriga Beach recently.

Prior to the area being closed to camping, rangers frequently turned campers away with dogs. Due to frequent vandalism, however, there are problems with maintaining park regulation signs concerning dogs. However, since the restriction on camping in this area, vandalism appears to have reduced.

NPWS officers have a very large area to patrol and it is not possible for there to be a continuous presence at any one location. Notwithstanding, I have been assured that additional attention will be given to this area during patrols and appropriate infringement notices will be issued where breach-warrant such action.

Should your members become aware of specific instances of the problem in the future, they may wish to contact the local NPWS office, either at Nowra on telephone number (02) 44 23 2170 or Ulladulla on telephone number (02) 44 55 3826.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely,

Pam Allan MP
Minister for the Environment

4 August 1998

Dear Senator Kay Patterson
Chair person Senate Environmental Legislation Committee

We would be grateful if your committee could hold one of your meetings in Sydney. Our Society, the oldest in Australia and possibly the oldest in the world, has a number of items of importance regarding the need for national involvement. Some of these include water quality, care of the oceans whose health is linked with care of what happens on land, world heritage sites, wildlife corridors and their importance in the era of global warming, endangered species of plants and animals to mention only a few of topics in which we are interested.

We could organise experts in the various fields if the meeting is held in Sydney otherwise we would only come in person with our executive officer, if it is confined to Canberra.

We would be grateful for a quick reply so we can organise our experts.

Yours sincerely,

Vincent Serventy

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VINCENT SERVENTY

President